

Fraudster who scammed celebs demands to be paid for his services

By Kathianne Boniello

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Martin Scorsese, SNL creator Lorne Michaels and photographer Annie Leibovitz are just three of Starr's A-list clients.

Photo: Getty Images

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Celebrity clients scammed by convicted Ponzi schemer Kenneth I. Starr are being told by a court trustee to pay the felon for his "services."

Starr, a Bronx accountant who amassed a roster of A-list clients — including director Martin Scorsese, photographer Annie Leibovitz and "Saturday Night Live" creator Lorne Michaels — was convicted in 2011 of money laundering and wire fraud in a \$33 million scheme.

He filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy just before he was sentenced to 7½ years in prison.

Now four years into the bankruptcy proceedings, court-appointed trustee Robert Geltzer has sued roughly 50 Starr clients, claiming they failed to pay bills for Starr's work.

Some of those sued have settled, and a few, including singer Paul Simon, whom Geltzer accused of owing more than \$17,000, got their cases dropped.

But others, including Leibovitz and Planet Hollywood founder Keith Barish, are being hounded for hundreds of thousands of dollars based on Starr's books, records show.

In court papers, Barish says Geltzer's claim that he owes \$341,000 is "predicated on little more than the dubious records of a fraudster . . . It is not plausible against the backdrop of a Ponzi scheme to allege that the fraudster's books and records are to simply be believed."

The invoices cited by Geltzer, which claim Barish was charged \$20,000 a month, were never sent to

Barish, and he never agreed to pay those amounts, the restaurateur's lawyers say.

Leibovitz said the trustee's claims that she owes more than \$440,000 were "out of thin air."

"Research does not reveal any Ponzi schemer who successfully sued his victims for failure to pay the reasonable value of his services, yet, the trustee attempts to do just that," her lawyers said in legal papers.

Others say they've been shaken down, too.

Book collector Susan Jaffee Tane invested \$5 million with Starr but pulled her money out in 2008 amid heavy losses. Starr's bookkeepers continued to bill her for a year afterward, she argues in court papers. But the trustee continues to try to collect \$12,000 from Tane.

Geltzer "is guilty of intent to deceive the court," Tane says in court papers, claiming that upon Starr's release from prison next year, "he will find his company to be conducting, via the trustee, a continuing criminal enterprise."

A source called the bankruptcy proceedings under Geltzer little more than "shakedown litigation."

"It's disgusting," the source said.

The trustee gets a percentage of everything he collects. The Bankruptcy Court is seeking to pay out \$50 million to dozens of creditors, including actress Uma Thurman, who submitted a claim of nearly \$2.5 million.

Some folks are settling, "giving them small amounts of money to go away," the source said.

Pulitzer-winning author Cormac McCarthy handed over \$2,500. The estate of William Salomon, who launched Salomon Brothers, paid out \$18,000 just a few weeks after his death.

Geltzer, a Manhattan lawyer, was appointed in 2011 to oversee the Starr bankruptcy proceedings.

In 2013, he made headlines after suing two Catholic schools to recover \$45,000 paid by a bankrupt Staten Island couple to cover their kids' tuition. The judge blasted his claim, calling it "at odds with common sense."

Geltzer did not return a message seeking comment.

A-listers challenge their 'debts' to Starr

Ken Starr's former clients owe the Ponzi schemer tens of thousands of dollars, claims the trustee overseeing Starr's bankruptcy case, who has filed lawsuits against the debtors. While some folks settled, others say the "debts" are pure fiction:

Annie Leibovitz, photographer

Owed \$440,306.89

Fighting in court

Lorne Michaels, "SNL" creator

Owed \$37,500

Fighting in court

Harvey Weinstein, movie producer

Owed \$25,000



Kenneth I. Starr
Photo: AP

Fighting in court

Paul Simon, musician

Owed \$17,000

Case dropped

Keith Barish, movie producer/Hollywood founder

Owed \$341,641.29

Fighting in court

Rob Moore, Former NY Jets wide receiver

Owed \$22,924.42

Settled \$10,500

Harold Evans/Tina Brown; journalists

Owed \$98,410.19

Fighting in court

Cormac McCarthy, Pulitzer Prize-winning author

Owed \$8,756.68

Settled \$2,500

Martin Scorsese, director

Owed \$600,000

Settled \$250,000

William R. Salomon, late Salomon Bros. exec

Owed \$48,646.07

Estate settled \$18,000

Doug Liman, movie director

Owed \$11,902.07

Settled \$3,500

Alan Stillman, Smith & Wollensky's owner/TGI Friday's founder

Owed \$12,562.81

Settled \$5,000

Casey Siemaszko, actor

Owed \$5,456.25

Discontinued

Linda Wachner, former Warnaco Group CEO

Owed \$8,000

Default judgment filed

David Halberstam, late journalist

Owed \$21,145.01

Default judgment filed

Jeff Zucker, CNN president

Owed \$12,834.63

Proved he owed nothing, no lawsuit filed

Paul Guilfoyle, "CSI" actor

Owed \$1,890

Proved he owed nothing, no lawsuit filed

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